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Employability of graduates is one of the measures of success for any school. This study aimed at determining the employability and the contribution of learned competencies and Catholic education in the workplace for the graduates of Cor Jesu College. It employed descriptive research design. Frequency and percentages were used in analyzing the data. Results showed that almost 86.7% of the graduates are employed. Most of them worked under an employer, had a permanent or regular status and mostly belonged to the rank and file. About 2/3 of them worked in the government sector, and the vast majority worked in the Philippines. They got their job through a recommendation of someone or by merely being a walk-in applicant. The majority also landed a job within six months after graduation. Their first job was related to the course they took up in the school. The range of their current salary was within 5,000–15,000 pesos. The top three competencies learned in school that were helpful in the workplace were communication skills, human relation skills, and information technological skills. They also considered their Catholic education as a factor that helped them in their professional life. The result affirmed the quality of Catholic education that Cor Jesu College had offered particularly in preparing students for the world of work. The implication of this study was for the school to look into the school initiated job opportunities and to explore on courses related to public administration.

Introduction

One of the most concrete and reliable indicators of the success of any higher educational institution (HEI) is the employability of its graduates. The school is expected to prepare its students for work to contribute to society. However, countries in different parts of the world are always confronted with problems of unemployment. Unfortunately, some of the unemployed individuals have college degrees. With the growing number of unemployed graduates all over the world (Abel, Deitz, & Su, 2014; SDR/Sunnex, 2014 ; Nawaguna, 2014; Sharma, 2014; Godman, Kirkham & Kraland, 2013), this is coupled with a growing concern over job mismatches (Andrews & Russell, 2012); Cavanagh, Burston, Southcombe & Bartram, 2015; CMO 32, 2010; Lesgold, Feuer & Black, 1997; Lave & Wenger, 1991), which contributes to the problem of unemployment. The workplace is in need of a labor force equipped with necessary skills and is responsive to the needs and requirements of the industry. Employers expect that training in school is the preparation of students for the world of work (Hesketh, 2000). However, this is not always the case as evidence by the job mismatches. Though there might be jobs

available which do not necessarily demand a college degree (McGuinness, 2013), it remains imperative that training institutions equip students with the necessary skills for future related jobs. In other words, whether from a college or high school graduate, employers are looking for skills that fit the industry needs.

In the Philippines, the same problem of unemployment is happening. According to the National Statistics Office (NSO) report, 18% of unemployed Filipinos are college graduates (Torres, 2013). In response to this growing problem, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) even released a moratorium order (CMO 32, s. 2010) for the opening of courses that are already flooded with enrollees and whose job demand is low. One of the reasons for this order is to address the problem of job mismatch. Schools are mandated by the commission to ensure the teaching of required competencies so that when their graduates are hired they perform as expected. Moreover, the government, through CHED, expects the schools to address the gap by offering programs that address the demands of the industry.

Cor Jesu College (CJC), as a higher educational institution, responded to this call from CHED by crafting a new five-year strategic plan with emphasis on the quality of graduates. Also, the school is preparing for its 60th foundation in 2019. After sixty years of existence, CJC creates mechanisms to evaluate its program, services, and curriculum. One of these mechanisms is a tracer study with the aim of determining the employability of its graduates and the help of Catholic education to their work. The purpose of this study is significant for the improvement of the programs and services of CJC. Though there are numerous tracer studies with a focus on employability, this article offers a unique addition to the contribution of Catholic education which is something unique for CJC and for other Catholic higher educational institutions to ponder.

Review of Related Literature

Tracer studies are regularly done by schools and institutions not only to trace their graduates but also to get information to the relevance and effectiveness of their programs in preparing students for work. In this review, a discussion on several concepts is given importance particularly on education and employability and employability attributes.

Education and Employability

The focus on the employability of graduates is gaining more emphasis for higher educational institutions (HEIs) as the industry expects a work-ready supply in the labor market. Knight and Yorke (2003) viewed employability “as the confluence of understanding, subject-specific and generic social practices (or skills), metacognition (reflection or strategic thinking) and cell A incremental self-theories (intelligence as a social and practical achievement, not as a God-given” (p. 7-8). Schools work on these aspects through a responsive and dynamic curriculum, qualified and competent human resource, upgraded and modern facilities, and responsive support services. In fact, HEIs are mandated by governments to provide quality education which translates to producing the best trained workforce (Andrews & Russell, 2012; Belwal, Priyadarshi & Al Fazari, 2017; Bridgstock, 2009; Yoong, Don & Foroutan, 2017). For example, in the United Kingdom, aside from government’s monitoring on the performance of employees, the government also tasked higher education institutions to ensure the employability of their graduates (Knight & Yorke, 2003). In Malaysia, the government puts the needs of the industry as a top priority for schools to tailor their training. In support, the Malaysian government invested on creating the Graduate Employability Taskforce which produced *The National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012–2017* (Yoong, Don & Foroutan, 2017). In response to

the challenges and demands of the industry, schools are focusing intently on graduate attributes with employability skills to make their graduates competitive (Nilsson, 2010; Baker, 2009; Nair, Patil & Mertova, 2009; Bennett, Dunne & Carre', 2000).

In a review of 187 published articles on employability from 2012–2016, Artess, Mellors-Bourne & Hooley (2017) found that higher educational institutions had responded to the challenges of their graduates' employability by creating frameworks and implementing different strategies. Some of these were:

“changing the structures seeks to reorganise the institution to make it more effective in delivering employability. This might include changes to staffing, resourcing, curriculum and institutional mission;

changing the programme mix focuses on the development of the range of programmes and qualifications offered. For example, this may include the development of programmes that have a strong vocational focus, placement years and an increase in employer involvement; **curriculum development** explores how changes to the current curriculum such as the introduction of employability modules or employability elements can support graduate employability;

extra-curricular provision focuses on what institutions can do outside of the core curriculum through the provision of career and employability services and other provision designed to enhance the student experience while co-curricular provision emphasizes provision which complements or extends the curriculum;

networking explores the way in which institutions can involve external stakeholders in the development of student employability” (Artess, Mellors-Bourne & Hooley, 2017, p. 8).

Most of the curricular and co-curricular offerings in higher education include different programs and activities wherein a student is immersed in the real world situation. Additionally, Knight and Yorke (2003) identified four ways to enhance students' employability. These were work experience, entrepreneurship modules, careers advice, and portfolios, profiles, and records of achievement. These were all embedded in the whole formation of a student in preparation for their future employment. Moreover, among the soft skills commonly mentioned as significant for employment, the character seems to be given more weight by employers. For example, in a survey among 100 companies in India, the employers rated integrity and values as number one compared to other six skills—results orientation, core domain knowledge, better aptitude, cultural fitment, teamwork and customer orientation, and English communication skills (Ghosh, 2017). Hence, education or training prepares students or trainees towards expected jobs related to the competencies they learned.

Employability Attributes

While different studies reported similar or different results, there were, however, most common attributes for employability. Some of these were *communication skills* (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz, 2017; Moore & Moton, 2017; Oluwatobi, Ayedun, Ajibola, Iroham & Akinjare, 2017; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017); *problem solving skills* (Sarkar, Overton, Thompson & Rayner, 2016; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017); *time management* (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz, 2017); *teamwork* (Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Tan, 2016); and *problem solving skills* (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Sarkar, Overton, Thompson & Rayner, 2016). Interestingly, few studies identified particular attributes or skills as contributory factors to employability like *sports engagement* (Griffiths, Bullough, Shibli & Wilson, 2017), *individual academic work* such as the writing of a literature review (Andersen & Lees, 2017), and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills* (Garrido, Sullivan & Gordon, 2010; Green, 2017; Picatoste, Pérez-Ortiz & Ruesga-Benito, 2017). However, the aforementioned skills were the most generic and scholars argued that these were not enough noting the fast-changing

work environment and the upgrading of industry needs.

Because the concept of employability has become more complex, researchers provided new ways of looking at it. Some literature highlighted either the human capital theory or the labor demand theory, but most studies considered both. For example, a study in Australia revealed that abilities to “communicate, analyze and solve problems, work as a team member, tackle unfamiliar problems, and plan one’s work are skills most needed in the labor market” (GCCA, 1999 in Levin & Tempone, 2002: p. 253). In Portugal, using official data on education, skills and tenure for 1991, 1994 and 1997 and in training for 1990, 1991, 1996 and 1997, it was found out that high skills, high levels of education and high levels of tenure were predictors of employability (Tomé, 2007). Some employers would even prefer applicants coming from a distinct school (Singh & Singh, 2008) and possessed preferred skills (Shannon, 2012).

There were also efforts to bring together the many aspects on employability to respond to the clamor from the industry. McArthur, Kubacki, Pang and Alcaraz (2017) reviewed literatures on graduate employability and categorized these studies into four areas: definitional literature that reflects the newness of this field of study, defining such terms as soft skills, competencies, and work-ready; a smaller body of work on curriculum development to address employers’ needs; factor analyses of employability skills; and gap analyses of the discrepancies between teaching and practice. Though this model was more encompassing, it was worth noting that it gave clearer definition on what soft skills were. Moreover, emphasis on the soft skills is gaining the interests among employers (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Mishra, 2014; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017). For example, Thakar and Mehta (2017) suggested the inclusion of what they called as secondary attributes such as personal, social, psychological and other environmental variables. Bringing together the different literature on employability was not easy because different situations called for different understanding.

As an educational institution, Cor Jesu College continues to find means to improve its programs and services. It is also very much interested if its graduates are employed and are performing well, influenced by the training and formation they had while still in school. Hence, this tracer study was done to give the school reliable information about its graduates in the workplace.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the employability and the contribution of learned competencies and Catholic education in the workplace for the graduates of Cor Jesu College. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions (1.) What is the profile of the alumni in terms of employment status, location, designation/position, category of company, finding their first job, the length of time in landing their first job, job’s relation to course taken, and salary range?; (2.) What competencies learned in college that are helpful in the workplace; and (3.) Did their Catholic education in CJC help them in their work?

Method

This study employed a descriptive research design. The respondents of the study were the college alumni of Cor Jesu College who graduated from the school year 2008–2009 to 2012–2013. The survey was done in two ways—distribution of questionnaires and an online survey. Due to the limitation of achieving the sample size, quota sampling was employed with the target number of 300. Due to the difficulty of getting responses, a major challenge in any tracer study, the data analysis commenced when the 93% (279) response rate was achieved based on the quota. The survey questionnaire was adapted from the previous tracer study tool of the school. It went through validation of content by the deans and program heads of the school. The respondents were asked to reflect their names on the questionnaire for proper documentation and to avoid duplication in the two forms of surveys. However, confidentiality was observed by

not divulging their names and keeping the questionnaires in a secured place. Permission was sought before the respondents were asked to answer the survey. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentages.

Results

Two-hundred seventy-nine (279) alumni were able to answer the survey questionnaires. However, not all of them answered all the questions. Hence, a total number of the population in each table was not consistent with the total population. The results are presented here into three clusters—employment profile, competencies learned in college, and contribution of Catholic education to alumni's work.

Employment Profile

Majority of the alumni of Cor Jesu College were employed which accounted for 86.74% as compared to not employed with only 13.26%. For those who were employed, 64.76% were regular or with permanent status followed by contractual (27.31%), temporary (3.96%) and casual (3.96%). 89.25% were working under an employer (89.2%) while only 4.96% were self-employed. However, there were those who were also employed by an employer and at the same time having another job of their own (5.79%). Almost all of the respondents worked within the country (95.55%) while 4.45% worked abroad.

Concerning designation or position, 77.63% were in the staff or rank and file. It was followed by those with supervisory positions with 11.84%, middle managerial rank with 7.46%, Self-employed 2.19% and Top Managerial with 0.88%. Also, the majority of the respondents worked in the government sector (67.11%) while the rest were in the private sector (32.89%).

As to how they got a job, 33.46% of the respondents said they were recommended by someone, 21.93% as a walk-in applicant, and 20.07% got the information from friends. Other reasons were job fair conducted by the school (8.55%), response to an advertisement (6.32%), others (4.46%), job fair outside the school (2.97%), family business (1.86%) and School Bulletin Board (0.37%). Regarding the length of time they found a job, half of the respondents (50.00%) got a job in less than a month. It was followed by those who landed a job in just one to six months (34.44%). Others got the job in seven to eleven months (7.04%), one year to less than three years (5.93%), three years and above (1.85%) and two years to less than three years (0.74%).

Table 1. Employment status of the alumni of Cor Jesu College.

Being Employed or not	N	Percent
Employed	242	86.74
Not Employed	37	13.26
Total	279	100.0
Status of Those Employed	N	Percent
Regular or Permanent	147	64.76
Temporary	9	3.96
Contractual	62	27.31
Casual	9	3.96
Total	227	100.00
Type of Employment	N	Percent
Working under an employer	216	89.25
Self-employed	12	4.96
Both of the above	14	5.79
Total	242	100

Table 2. Place of employment of the alumni of Cor Jesu College.

Place of Employment	N	Percent
within the Philippines	236	95.55
Abroad/Overseas	11	4.455
Total	247	100.00

Table 3. Designation/position and the type of company where the alumni of Cor Jesu College work.

Designation/Position	N	Percent
Top Managerial	2	0.88
Middle Managerial	17	7.46
Supervisor	27	11.84
Staff or Rank and File	177	77.63
Self-employed	5	2.19
Total	228	100.00
Category of Company	N	Percent
Government	153	67.11
Private	75	32.89
Total	228	100.00

Table 4. How the alumni find their first job and the length of time of landing this job

On Finding Their First Job	N	Percent
Response to an advertisement	17	6.32
As walk-in applicant	59	21.93
Recommended by someone	90	33.46
Information from friends	54	20.07
School bulletin board	1	0.37
Family Business	5	1.86
Job Fair outside the school	8	2.97
Job Fair conducted by CJC	23	8.55
Others	12	4.46
Total	269	100.00
Length of Time in Landing Their First Job	N	Percent
Less than a month	135	50.00
1 to 6 months	93	34.44
7 to 11 months	19	7.04
1 year to less than 3 years	16	5.93
2 years to less than 3 years	2	0.74
3 years and above	5	1.85
Total	270	100.00

Table 5. Relationship of first job to course taken up in Cor Jesu College and the length of time of staying on this job

First Job in Relation to a Course Taken up in CJC	N	Percent
Yes	206	76.01
No	65	23.99
Total	271	100.00
Length of Stay on Their First Job		
less than a month	14	5.19
1 to 6 months	75	27.78
7 to 11 months	53	19.63
1 year to less than 2 years	77	28.52
2 years to less than 3 years	20	7.41
3 years and above	31	11.48
Total	270	100.00

After graduation from Cor Jesu College, those who got a job related to the course they took up in school accounted for 76.01% while 23.99% of the respondents said their first job had no relation to their course. As to the length of stay on their first job, the majority stayed within one year to less than two years (28.52%) and one to six months (27.78%). Some stayed for only seven to eleven months (19.63%), three years and above (11.48%), two years and less than three years (7.41%) and less than a month (5.19%).

When it comes to salary as shown in Table 6, 48.52% are paid between 5,000–9,999 pesos, 22.96% receive between 10,000 to 14,999 (22.96%), 11.85% with 15,000–19,999, 6.67% with 30,000 and above, 7.04% with 20,000–24,999 and 2.96% with 25,000–29,999.

Table 6. The range of current salary of the alumni of Cor Jesu College

Current Salary	N	Percent
5,000 to 9,999	131	48.52
10,000 to 14,999	62	22.96
15,000 to 19,999	32	11.85
20,000 to 24,999	19	7.04
25,000 to 29,999	8	2.96
30,000 and above	18	6.67
Total	270	100

Competencies learned in college that are helpful in the workplace

One of the major questions asked was on the learned competencies that were helpful in the workplace. Though there were six identified skills, the respondents chose as many as they can in what they believed were as useful to them. Almost tied for the top spot were communication skills (22%) and human relation skills (21%). Next in rank was information technology skills (16%), critical thinking skills (15%) and last was entrepreneurial skills (10%).

Table 7: Competencies learned in school that are helpful in the workplace.

Competencies	Total Responses	Percentage	Rank
Communication Skills	204	22%	1
Human Relation Skills	196	21%	2
Entrepreneurial Skills	95	10%	6
Information Technology Skills	155	16%	3
Problem-Solving Skills	148	16%	4
Critical Thinking Skills	144	15%	5
TOTAL	942	100%	

Contribution of Catholic Education to the Alumni's Work

The respondents were asked if the Catholic education they got from Cor Jesu College helped them in their work. The answer was a resounding yes with 95.22% of them gave their affirmative response.

Table 8. The Contribution of Catholic education in CJC to the alumni's work

	N	Percent
Yes	259	95.22
No	13	4.78
Total	272	100.00

Discussion

With almost 90% of the respondents already employed and more than half of them with a regular or permanent status, the result was good news for the school that has labored much on the formation of its students to become not only ready but also sought after by employers. Although unemployment among college graduates was prevalent in many parts of the world (Abel, Deitz, & Su, 2014; SDR/Sunnex, 2014; Nawaguna, 2014; Sharma, 2014; Godman, Kirkham & Kraland, 2013), graduates of Cor Jesu College found jobs quickly. While most of them were working under an employer, few were self-employed, and some both employed and self-employed, meaning they also had other money-earning jobs. This finding can be attributed to the integration of entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum or other co-curricular programs as schools find these skills very relevant for future engagements regardless what courses students take (Duval-Couetil, Shartrand & Reed, 2016; Gul & Mehmood, 2016; Jiang, Xue-Mei, 2017; Zhao & Gearin, 2016). Finding extra income aside from regular jobs is a direction many people are seriously considering nowadays. With entrepreneurial skills learned in school, although last in rank in Table 7 for the respondents of this study, graduates can easily venture into business, thus, earning extra income.

Worth noting also was a place of employment wherein majority of the respondents are working within the country. Although the lure of working abroad is very enticing for many (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005; Yang, 2003; United Nations, 2002. Laguatan, 2011), the respondents preferred to stay or found jobs domestically. This finding is consistent with the data on graduates immediately finding a job after graduation which also means that they find a job within the country. Understandably, most of the respondents would be in the rank and file formation given the fact that they were young and just new to the job, although a good number managed to be at the supervisory and even top managerial positions. One interesting result was the kind

of company where the respondents worked. Most of them were in the public sector. This finding supported the report from the Civil Service Commission (CSC) about the increasing number of workers in the government sector (CSC, 2014). Aside from the availability of jobs, there was also a sense of security when one is employed by the government. This is similar to how Americans perceive having a job in the government (Frank & Lewis, 2004; Gao, Kong, & Kong, 2017; Lewis & Frank, 2002). It was surprising in the sense that CJC did not even offer Bachelor in Public Administration. Judging from this finding, the school might consider offering courses related to public service like Bachelor in Public Administration.

On the part of the school, there was more to be done in terms of providing alumni with needed information about job opportunities. Job fairs conducted in the school and the posting in the bulletin board did not show much fruit based on the results of the study. The respondents relied more on the recommendation of someone or their efforts of applying for a vacant position. On the one hand, this is something worth reflecting, particularly on school's job awareness and the whole job placement program. On the other hand, it can be argued that the alumni easily found jobs because they were suited for the available ones, coupled with people they knew who were willing to help. Moreover, the advent of social media can also be attributed on finding a job (Mowbray, Hall, Raeside & Robertson, 2017; Priyadarshini, Kumar & Jha, 2017), or through the recommendation by someone who could possibly be informed through social media interaction. Also, what was more amazing was that almost half of them landed a job less than one month after graduation. In other words, these alumni were qualified and easily took the job. It also made sense if there was already a job waiting for them even before graduation, which was a typical scenario particularly to education graduating students. For instance, principals sent letters to CJC about job vacancies as early as December or January. In addition, with the majority of them (76%) landing a job in relation to the course they took, it showed the relevance and responsiveness of the courses offered by the school. As against the reported job mismatches, CJC produced graduates who landed a job related to their course. However, the limitation of this claim was on having a job and not necessarily how they performed as evaluated by the employers.

As to the competencies learned in school which are beneficial to the respondents' experience in the workplace, communication skills top the list. It showed that the school capacitated them with this particular skill, which is one of the common attributes of what employers look for (McArthur, Kubacki, Pang & Alcaraz, 2017; Moore & Moton, 2017; Oluwatobi, Ayedun, Ajibola, Iroham & Akinjare, 2017; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou, & Michalopoulou, 2017). Almost tied for communication skills is human relation skills. Building good relationship among colleagues and supervisors are one of the soft skills employers want for their employees (Chang, Jia & Cai, 2013; Jang & Kandampully, 2013; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017). Building good relationship with co-workers and supervisors is a mark of a true Cor Jesu specifically manifesting one of the pillars of the school—community.

Moreover, the respondents affirmed the great help of Catholic education in their work. It means that the formation they got from Cor Jesu College is relevant to their professional life. Though in this study, the question was generic about the help of Catholic education in their work, it can be argued that the values learned in school were carried out after graduation (Calpo & Bullecer, 2017). These values learned in school, facilitated through the holistic program of Catholic education, contribute to the development of soft skills, which are emphasized in the workplace (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016; Mishra, 2014; Ritter, Small, Mortimer & Doll, 2017; Thakar and Mehta, 2017).

The study was limited only to the profiling of the alumni, competencies learned and the simple question with the help of Catholic education to work experience. The question of agreeability only touched the superficial level. A follow-up study in this aspect is recommended to understand further how the formation in school has an impact on the graduates' life at the workplace. Also, the number of targeted respondents was not achieved.

Conclusion

The result of the study affirmed the quality of education Cor Jesu College has offered to its graduates. The number of those who are employed and self-employed is a testament to the school's training that prepares graduates to the world of work. However, providing job opportunities through school initiated program and activities must be strengthened since most of the respondents got the information from outside sources. Nevertheless, the training or formation program that the school has offered can be argued as relevant and responsive to the industry since most of the respondents landed a job in less than six months. Moreover, most common attributes employers were looking, such as communication, human relation, and information technology skills, were also learned in school which were helpful in the experience of the alumni in the workplace. As to the job placement, it can be argued that the government sector is one of the biggest markets for Cor Jesu College graduates. The school, therefore, will have to take this information seriously so that students will be prepared and well-equipped if they will someday be working in the government. Hence, one implication of this study is for the school to consider offering programs much needed in the government sector like public administration course. Moreover, the school will have to evaluate its program and see how its graduate can maximize the massive demand for labor in the private sector.

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